

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

SAJ-01 TRSE-00 SAM-01 OMB-01 EURE-00 FRB-03 /071 W

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P 031347Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1862

INFO: AMCONSUL LENINGRAD PRIORITY 3517

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN, PINT, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET DUTY ON REMITTANCES FROM ABROAD

REF: (A) MOSCOW 8117; (B) MOSCOW 7925

1. OFFICIAL BULLETIN OF SOVIET GOVERNMENT DECREES (SOBRANIYE POSTANOVLENIY PRAVITEL'STVA SSSR), NO. 14, 1975, JUST RECEIVED, CONTAINS COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DECREE SIGNED MAY 23 CONCERNING STATE DUTY ON FOREIGN REMITTANCES TO SOVIET CITIZENS. THE DECREE GIVES MORE DETAILED INFORMATION THAN WAS CONTAINED IN MAY 23 UKZSE PUBLISHED IN VEDOMOSTI SSSR, NO. 22, OF MAY 28, 1975 (SEE REFTEL B).

2. INFORMAL TRANSLATION OF DECREE'S OPERATIVE SECTIONS FOLLOWS:

QUOTE - IN CONNECTION WITH THE UKASE OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE USSR SUPREME SOVIET OF MAY 23, 1975, "CONCERNING THE STATE DUTY ON PAYMENTS TO USSR CITIZENS OF SUMS BY CURRENCY TRANSFERS RECEIVED FROM ABROAD," THE USSR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DECREES:

(1) TO ESTABLISH THAT THE STATE DUTY ON PAYMENTS OF FUNDS TO SOVIET CITIZENS RECEIVED FROM ABROAD BY CURRENCY TRANSFERS BE LEVIED IN THE AMOUNT OF 30 PERCENT OF THE SUM TRANSFERRED.

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(2) THAT THE USSR MINISTRY OF FINANCE WILL WAIVE PAYMENT OF THE DUTY BY CITIZENS WHEN THE TRANSFERS RECEIVED FROM ABROAD (CONSIST OF):

ALIMONY PAYMENTS;

FUND RECEIVED AS INHERITANCES;

ROYALTY PAYMENTS;

PAYMENTS RECEIVED AS COMPENSATION FOR INFLICTED INJURY;

FUNDS RECOVERED FROM THE SALE OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS OF CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD AND RECEIVED FROM OTHER ASPECTS OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS (PO DRUGIM DELAM IMUSHCHESTVENNOGE KHAKTERA), INCLUDING FUNDS BELONGING TO RE-EMIGRANTS AND REPATRIATED PERSONS;

SUMS TRANSFERRED BY PERSONNEL OF USSR AGENCIES LIVING ABROAD AND INDIVIDUALS ON TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT FROM THE USSR ABROAD;

FUNDS RECEIVED FROM MILITARY PERSONNEL, WORKERS, AND STAFFS OF MILITARY UNITS AND ORGANIZATIONS OF THE USSR MINISTRY OF DEFENSE;

PENSION FUNDS. END QUOTE

3. COMMENT: LOCAL US CORRESPONDENTS ARE HAVING FIELD DAY WITH THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, WHICH THEY TAKE AS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF SOVIET DISCRIMINATION AGAINST JEWISH (AND OTHER) ACTIVISTS IN AREA OF REMITTANCES FROM OVERSEAS. AT LEAST ONE CORRESPONDENT (TOTH, LOS ANGELES TIMES) BROUGHT MATTER TO ATTENTION OF SENATOR JAVITS AT SPASO HOUSE DINNER JULY 1, INDICATING THAT THIS WAS "PROOF" OF SOVIET INTENTIONS TOWARD DISSIDENTS. WHILE THIS MAY INDEED BE SOVIET PURPOSE, IN EMBASSY'S VIEW IMPOSITION OF DUTY ON REMITTANCES PROVES NOTHING MORE OR LESS THAN EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS -- WHICH IN FACT IS SOMEWHAT CONFUSING, PARTICULARLY REGARDING FIFTH CATEGORY OF EXEMPTIONS. ALSO PRESENTLY UNCLEAR IS WHETHER NEW SYSTEM IS INTENDED TO CODIFY LONG-STANDING PRACTICE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CHARGING UP TO 35 PERCENT FOR CONVERTING HARD CURRENCY INTO VNESHPOSYLTORG COUPONS (DESCRIBED IN REF A). OTHER GROUPS WHICH WOULD BE AFFECTED INCLUDE ARMENIANS, SOME GEORGIANS, AND, IN GENERAL, ALL OTHER SOVIET CITIZENS RECEIVING REMITTANCES FROM ABROAD. CLEARLY THE NEW SET-UP FAVORS THE PRIVILEGED CLASS AND DISCRIMINATES AGAINST THE REMAINING 99 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION. THUS, WHILE IT IS A RIP-OFF, ACTUAL INTENDED GOAL MAY BE SIMPLY TO FIND ANOTHER EASY WAY TO SWELL THE HARD-CURRENCY COFFERS

OF VENSHTORGBANK, A DESIRE UNDOUBTEDLY INDUCED BY THE EVER-
GREATER NUMBER OF SUCH REMITTANCES TAKING PLACE. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH
ACTION MAY WELL BE POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, THIS HAS YET TO BE PROVEN.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CUSTOMS DUTIES, LAW, JEWS, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MOSCOW09273
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750231-0148
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750788/aaaadanq.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MOSCOW 8117, 75 MOSCOW 7925
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <11 JUN 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <22 OCT 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET DUTY ON REMITTANCES FROM ABROAD
TAGS: EFIN, PINT, UR
To: STATE LENINGRAD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006